WHY WAIT FOR SLOWER MAGS???
COMICS NEWS UP TO 3 MONTHS EARLY!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#14

USA $2.95 / Canada $3.99

September 1995

Double Impact & Hellina

"BAD GIRL" CROSSOVERS!

BLACK SEPT. COULD SURPRISE DEALERS!

ARTEMIS RETURNS FROM THE DEAD!

09>

0 74470 84190 6

In 1993, Wizards of the Coast revolutionized card games with MAGIC The Gathering.

This summer, WotC's Alter Ego™ Design Group will redefine roleplaying with

EVERWAY™

Set in the limitless worlds of fantastic imagination, EVERWAY relies on imagery and symbols to create dramatic stories of fate and fortune.

The worlds of EVERWAY move under the guidance of primal, metaphysical forces. Humans understand these forces through the Fortune Deck, a set of thirty-six unique, symbolic cards. These cards guide the life of your character—and the play of the game.

Wizards of the Coast

ALTER EGO GAMES

EVERWAY and **Alter Ego** are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. WIZARDS OF THE COAST is a registered trademark. All rights reserved. Artwork courtesy of Jeff Miracola and Scott Kirschner © 1995.

WIN SOLAR #46! SIGNED BY DAN JURGENS!

You lucky son of a gun! All you need do is fill out the coupon below and you could be randomly selected to win! One lucky stiff will walk away with **Solar** #46 signed by Dan Jurgens.

If this fantastic offer doesn't get your blood going, call an ambulance. Remember, tell us below what you're honestly thinking. Your input will help us to make **Vantage** even better for YOU!

☐ YES!!!

I want to win Solar #46 Signed By Dan Jurgens!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ AGE (OPTIONAL) _____

☐ (Optional) Hey **Vantage,** as long as I'm writing you, here's my quick two cents for Vantage Viewpoints! I want you to know what my dream crossover would be, what I think of this month's news, what I'm having for dinner tonight, or some other pointless drivel:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I usually get my Vantage *(check one)*: ☐ At a store ☐ From a mail order company
☐ From a distributor ☐ By subscription ☐ Other _____

Vantage Solar Contest • 13000 W. Blue Mound Road, #110 • Elm Grove, WI 53122

Solar, Man of The Atom™ & © 1995 Western Publishing Company, Inc. & Acclaim Comics, Inc.

VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS
number fourteen

contents

section

Vantage Picks & News 1
Stuff happens!
Artemis rises from the dead!
Ultraverse goes crazy! "Bad girls" crossover!

Non Sports Picks 2
Other stuff happens!
X-Men all-chromium! Gen 13!
Olivia! And More!

Comics Are For Reading First 3
Keller reads stuff! Batman Forever!
Plus, a cool indy book you never heard of.

Toy Picks 4
This has nothing to do with the column, but Vantage can't figure how to make the Beast flip. Looking for a Beast-flipping expert . . .

View From Chicago 5
Vantage welcomes aboard an exciting new columnist!

staff

Publisher and Editor	Rob Golub
Associate Editor	Steve Asvitt
Art Director	Michael Munshaw
Assistant Art Director	Arcadia Design
Non-Sports Expert	Rembert Parker
Columnist	Len Strazewski
Reading Picks	Rich Keller
Publisher's Assistant	Brian Petersen
Toy Picks	Gregg Keefer

Special thanks to our advisors!

Vantage Comic & Card Picks
Volume One, Number 14,
September 1995.

Office of Publication: Vantage-Golub Communications, Inc., 13000 W. Blue Mound Road, Suite #110, Elm Grove, WI 53122. Entire contents copyright © 1995 by Vantage-Golub Communications, Inc. **Vantage** is an imprint of Vantage-Golub Communications. All artwork © respective publishers and owners. All rights reserved. The **Vantage** and **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** logos are protected through the trademark laws of the United States of America and may not be reprinted without permission. Phone: 414-797-8221. Fax: 414-797-7960. America Online: RobVantage. Internet: RobVantage@aol.com (this gets you Rob Golub, you lucky dog). One year subscription (12 monthly issues): $34.95. One year subscription to the market guide only (12 monthly issues): $49.50 (roster limited). We welcome submissions (articles), comments, new advisors, press releases, product ideas, and free money. Write or call. We don't bite. Call or write for advertising rates. Limitations may apply. Mission: To provide comic retailers, dealers, and mature collectors with information, logical analysis, and entertainment not generally available to the public.

Cover: Chins & Jazz™ & © 1995 High Impact
Hellina™ & © 1995 Joseph A. Zyskowski

TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

Creed #1-up (Lightning Comics / All-new regular series launch)

Double Impact #3, both editions (High Impact Studios / 1st Appearance, variant, limited)

Nine Extreme Variant Covers (Image / Extreme / Quesada and Palmiotti variants)

MORE VANTAGE PICKS

The All New Exiles #1-up (Malibu / New X-Men title)

Ash #5 (Event Comics / double cover, Hildebrandts *paint* new character)

Double Impact / Hellina #1 (High Impact / crossover)

Exiles #∞ (Malibu / New X-Men title)

Glory/Avengelyne (Image / Extreme / Liefeld Chromium)

Hellina / Double Impact #1 (Lightning / crossover)

Kurt Busiek's Astro City, all (Image / Marvels done Image-style)

Riptide #1 (Image / Extreme / Liefeld Chromium)

Starman #1-up (DC / Popular Vertigo-like title)

Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #154 (DC / First appearance of Darkseid)

Underworld Unleashed #1-3 (DC / Launches Fall crossover)

Wonder Woman #90-up (DC / Artemis)

Zealot #1-up (Image / WildStorm / "Bad girl")

WATCH FOR THE VANTAGE STAR INDICATING OUR TOP PICKS!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

THE HOLD BOX SYSTEM TAKES A HIT

Just as I had feared, the hold box system is taking a hit. I believe that this is going to hurt comics, and small publishers in particular.

As you know, many retailers allow fans to place orders in advance for their comics. When the comics come in, retailers then place the reserved comics in "hold boxes." This system is good for comic sales, because it give fans two opportunities to buy comics — out of the catalogs in advance, and then off of the racks months later. If the hold box system deteriorates, I expect circulation numbers to fall industry-wide.

The hold box system is in danger for two major reasons: (1) Fans now need to pick up two or three catalogs to have access to *all* new comics. This is expensive and confusing for fans. (2) Comics are getting more expensive for retailers to buy. Increased shipping costs and rumored publisher discount reductions are the culprits. To make up for the losses, some retailers will need to reduce hold box discounts.

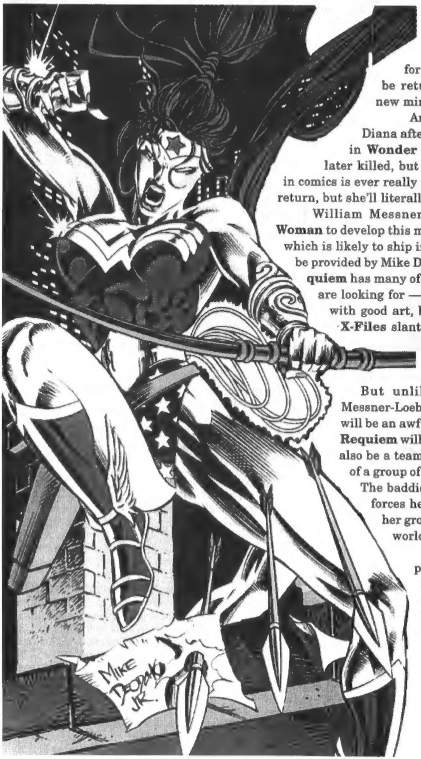
Lets play some chess. You are Marvel, DC, or Image, and catalog sales are falling. Fans are not getting to see your offerings anymore. What do you do? It seems likely to me that we may soon see free mini-catalogs from each major publisher — small, cheap-looking listings of what's due out that retailers pay pennies per copy for ... and then give out for free.

If that's where the big publishers go, it should work, but there would be one small problem: How will the independents publicize their books? Will people still buy the catalogs to see what the indys have to offer if they can get the listings from the major publishers for free? You know the answer.

Small publishers need to think about these sorts of things now. I hope I'm wrong, but we need to be ready for anything, as the world of comics continues to change faster than ever before.

— Rob Golub
Publisher

WONDER WOMAN REPLACEMENT TO RETURN IN MINI



Artemis™ & © 1995 DC Comics

Artemis, the popular "bad girl" character who replaced Wonder Woman for a short time last year, will be returning from the dead in a new miniseries.

Artemis was chosen to replace Diana after a contest between the two in **Wonder Woman** #91. Artemis was later killed, but don't cry too hard. Nobody in comics is ever really dead. Not only will Artemis return, but she'll literally climb out of her grave.

William Messner-Loebs has left **Wonder Woman** to develop this miniseries, called **Requiem,** which is likely to ship in six months or so. Art is to be provided by Mike Deodato's capable studio. **Requiem** has many of the elements to it that fans are looking for — it will be a "bad girl" book with good art, by a strong writer, with an **X-Files** slant. In the tradition of **Spectre** and **Starman**, it will be a DC universe book with a Vertigo feel.

But unlike some Vertigo books, Messner-Loebs promises **Vantage,** "there will be an awful lot of action in this book." **Requiem** will focus on Artemis, but it will also be a team book. "Artemis will be one of a group of quasi-covert super heroes." The baddies in this book are demonic forces here on Earth. Artemis leads her group as the best fighter in her world.

Requiem will be an experimental mini — if response is strong enough, a continuous series would likely be launched. **Vantage** looks forward to reading the book when it hits in 1996.

DOES THE AVENGERS CONSPIRACY CONTINUE???

DEODATO'S WONDER WOMAN WRITER JOINS HIM ON THOR

Loyal **Vantage** readers know that we subscribe to a Marvel/Avengers conspiracy theory where Marvel attempts to build Avengers into the next X-Men. We've heard this from a variety of different sources, and now this would seem to nail the lid on the coffin...

William Messner-Loebs, who wrote **Wonder Woman** while Deodato was on the book, now moves over to **Thor. Vantage's** theories would seem to be confirmed: Both the artist and the writer from super-hot **Wonder Woman** now have been pulled to Marvel's **Thor.**

Messner-Loebs says, however, that Marvel didn't even realize that he had worked on **Wonder Woman** with Deodato. Marvel sent Messner-Loebs the artwork to entice him to do the job, thinking that he was unfamiliar with Deodato's work. But if **Vantage** would like to believe otherwise, "I'm willing to go with that delusion," the writer told us.

Messner-Loebs picks up after about four issues of Deodato art on **Thor.** For a while **Thor** will be more Earth-oriented. Also, "I'm going to be totally rethinking the relationship of the gods to one another," he added. "I was told to be as bold and aggressive about storytelling as you can possibly be. I'm basically rethinking everything." Look for a growing romantic relationship between Thor and the Enchantress to become increasingly important as well.

Thor Artwork™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Messner-Loebs dropped one big hint — he'll mess around with the answer to an unusual question, "Who's the hero and who's the villain of the series?" He plans to make every issue "a new surprise," with the goal being to "make people think that

WORKING THE MARVEL WAY

William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato will now work together on **Thor,** having previously worked together on **Wonder Woman.** At DC, writers are usually required to turn in a full script, while at Marvel writers have notoriously been asked to turn in only a plot outline. From the plot outline, the pages are drawn and the words are created later.

But Messner-Loebs and Deodato will not have to change their methods. Messner-Loebs has been given the freedom to do a full script. "I was surprised there was not more honing to the company line of doing plot first." Besides, Messner-Loebs pointed out, Deodato doesn't speak English!

Thor has actually earned his power." He added, "the past will be changed too." Not to worry though, "we don't clone over here in Asgard."

Even as Thor is brought from Asgard back to Earth, Messner-Loebs feels that "there are still areas of Norse Mythology that haven't heavily been worked on." A final tidbit: Don't expect Thor to necessarily retain his current civilian identity.

NO MORE SHAKESPEAREAN THOR?

Along with bringing Thor back to Earth, there may be a reduction in some of that Thor-speak. New **Thor** writer Messner-Loebs promises less of a "Shakespearean influence." Also, says Messner-Loebs, "there should be a difference between gods speaking amongst themselves and with mortals."

Thor™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

QUESADA AND PALMIOTTI DO NINE RANDOM IMAGE COVERS

Superstar penciler Joe Quesada and master-inker Jimmy Palmiotti will be doing nine Extreme covers to be released this summer. Some are already out as you read this.

The covers will all (or mostly) be used as rare variant covers! Rob Liefeld, President of Extreme, had this to say, "We're big fans of Joe and Jimmy's work and are excited to see them illustrate some of the Extreme covers. The nine titles are: **Bloodstrike, Brigade, Chapel, Glory, Knightmare, Newmen, Prophet, Supreme,** and **Youngblood."**

The nine covers can be combined to form one beautiful mural. "The piece is massive," Palmiotti told **Vantage.** "You put them all together to make one huge canvas."

Vantage recommends scanning racks for the covers. The exact issue numbers for each book may not be released until weeks or even days beforehand. (**Vantage** is convinced Extreme does this just to torture us.)

Also due out from Extreme is an Art Adams variant cover on an **Avengelyne** book some time this summer. **Avengelyne** and **Black Flagg** from Maximum Press have been heating up and an Art Adams variant can't hurt.

"You put them all together to make one huge canvas"
Jimmy Palmiotti

Married To Vantage!

"Vantage gives me an advantage with my customers. It's excellent."
- Jan Sapp, Comic Chest, Virginia Beach, VA

"I read Vantage but I don't read Wizard™"
- Donald A. Sapp, Comic Chest, Virginia Beach, VA

VANTAGE COMIC & CARD PICKS

Wizard is ™ of Wizard Press

EXILES WILL BE A REGULAR X-MEN BOOK!

Juggernaut, Sierra Blaze & Reaper™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. The Strike, Shuriken, Amber Hunt & Exiles™ & © 1995 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

Malibu's **Exiles** will be relaunched as a new *regular X-Men title*, **Vantage** has learned. The title will feature Charles Xavier's brother, the Juggernaut, as well another two minor X-Men characters.

Exiles #∞ (Infinity) is a one shot due out with a host of other Infinity books during Malibu's Black September, which is a major Marvel/Malibu crossover. **Exiles #∞** is, yes, the first appearance of this new team, according to a Malibu source. And yes, you have heard of **Exiles** before — it was one of the first Ultraverse titles, canceled as part of a storyline. After Black September, it will be launched as a regular title starting with a new number one. The full title will be **The All New Exiles #1-up, and** the team will be all different.

Vantage cut to the chase and asked our Malibu source the BIG question: Will this title be an integrated part of the X-Men universe? "I can't tell you that," was all we could drag out of him. We did get this much from a Malibu statement — **The All New Exiles** continuous series "will affect both universes." Translation? We'll bet you the Hulk's purple pants that the Exiles will hang around the Ultraverse for the most part, sometimes playing around with visiting Marvel characters — at first — and then they'll someday join the rest of the X-Men in the Marvel universe. Bringing X-

> The title will feature Charles Xavier's brother, the Juggernaut

HOW WILL INFINITY PLAY IN THE MARKET?

Exiles: Infinity will actually be numbered as Exiles #∞. It said "Exiles: Infinity" and "Mantra: Infinity" and so forth in Mega Marvel, but the books will actually be **Exiles #∞** and **Mantra #∞**. This sort of numbering may make people roll their eyes at first, but it will probably make a lot more people interested in these books. Retailers may have underestimated demand. Exiles #∞ sticks out as the best dealer's choice — it is the only book that introduces something completely new.

The group's characters range from honorable to amoral. They aren't heroes or villains

Men into the Ultraverse pulls more sales towards Malibu today, and moving the book to Marvel's Earth would increase sales on **The All New Exiles** tomorrow. Now hear this: this is just a **Vantage** guess — we have no inside info, and we could be wrong. If our guess is right, **Exiles #∞** and **The All New Exiles #1**-up could become very sought after, low-print-run books.

The group's individual characters range from honorable to amoral. They "aren't heroes or villains ... they are individuals who have to figure out how to get along or die," Malibu's Chris Ulm told **Vantage.** "Besides the friction inside the team, they'll be up against an entire world that wants them dead." For complete descriptions, see "The Exiles Lineup."

WRITER IS READY

Joining Juggernaut from the Marvel Universe will be Siena Blaze and Reaper. **The All New Exiles** writer Terry Kavanagh said, "I'm anxious to sink my teeth into them. The mutants are always interesting to play with. I think it will be particularly fun to explore the under-used Reaper. And Strike's unique gift could lead to some fascinating possibilities."

THE EXILES LINE-UP

JUGGERNAUT

An irresistible force moonlighting as an immovable object. He is nothing short of pure raw physical power. Given his invulnerability by powerful Magics, he can crush anything in his path and shrug off any force foolish enough to try to harm him. Unfortunately, crushing things cannot solve every problem, and emotion can penetrate his invulnerability. First appearance: **X-Men Edition 1** #12

SIENA BLAZE

An enigma to those who think they know her. She has the power to devastate the planet, and the ruthlessness to use it. Remorse and restraint are concepts that she does not believe in. Why should she, when they would only get in the way of her fun? First appearance: **X-Men Unlimited** #1

REAPER

Call him a loser if you dare, but expect a quick cut from his blade in return. Once a small fish in a big pond, he is ready to make his name feared and respected in a whole new universe. Part man and part machine, he attempts to live up to his namesake. No one can escape the Reaper. First appearance: New **Mutants** #87

AMBER HUNT

Once a normal high school student, she held the power to destroy the Earth. She is the favored child of the Entity that jump-started the Earth into a battleground of Ultras. Her knowledge of the universe and beyond may dwarf that of any other, but it may be that knowledge which destroys her sanity. First appearance: **Exiles Edition 1** #1

THE STRIKE

The former Warstrike once lived for being "on the wire," but it gave him a terrifying glimpse into a apocalyptic future that makes him fear his own potential. Once he fought to forget the tragedies of the past, but now his search for the truth may bring him even closer to an ever greater catastrophe. First Appearance: **Mantra** #1.

SHURIKEN

An efficient and beautiful huntress who has been forced to follow the whims of Aladdin. Using only her skill and arsenal of versatile shurikens, she fears no opponent, and when the price of failure may be the life of her child ... she will not fail.

Juggernaut, Siena Blaze & Reaper ™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. The Strike, Shuriken, Amber Hunt & Exiles™ & © 1995 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

ULTRAVERSE IS SUDDENLY SMALLER, CHEAPER

Malibu has cleverly teased fandom by suggesting that the Ultraverse may cease to exist, or that the Ultraverse's planet Earth may cease to exist. But now the pieces are starting to fall into place — the Ultraverse is being relaunched as a smaller and less expensive line with new number ones.

After Black September — the title given to the upcoming Marvel/Malibu crossover — there will be only seven monthly Ultraverse titles. The titles are **The All New Exiles, Mantra, Prime, Rune, Siren, The Night Man,** and **UltraForce.** Black September is the catalyst for the relaunch of these titles, each with a new first issue. The relaunch will feature many new characters, all new storylines, and surprising guest stars.

Malibu Drops Prices After Mega Marvel!

Retailers have been saying that they cannot attract younger fans with today's cover prices, and Malibu is responding. All of the Black September infinity titles (#∞) kick off a new lower cover price of $1.50 each. This is a reduction of 40% from the old $2.50 prices on Ultraverse books!

The big surprise here is that this appears to be a last minute decision — the prices are listed at $2.50 in **Mega Marvel**! After **Mega Marvel** was printed, apparently, Malibu made its decision to drop prices. While retailers are being given the opportunity to reorder, many will not bother. Also, many fans who might have ordered the Infinity books out of **Mega Marvel** at $1.50 chose not to at $2.50. Some of these fans will pick up Infinity books off of the racks. This could turn out to be a major mismatch of supply and demand, causing some of these books (especially **Exiles** #∞) to do well in the back-issue market.

The prices will remain at $1.50 with the relaunch in October. Clearly, this is a grab at new readers. However, **Vantage** fears that Malibu's greatest current problems don't relate to price. It seems to **Vantage** that Malibu has lost its romantic appeal as a company. That is, we used to pick up a Malibu comic and feel like we were fighting the good fight against status quo. Here was a company that had grown from nothing into a real contender. That one thought made every book seem just a little magical.

GENERAL PUB

Ultraverse titles on Mega Marvel's September order form were listed at $2.50 each but will instead come out with $1.50 cover prices.

What Has Malibu Become?

Now, what is Malibu? It's an aggressive company with aggressive people. But no matter how aggressive you are, you need a quality concept to sell to the people. If Malibu has lost its romantic appeal as the underdog, it hasn't gained any appeal as the main place to be either. Fans looking for the most talked about books in comics will turn to **Uncanny X-Men, Amazing Spider-Man,** or **Gen 13.**

No, instead of keeping the proud shine of a rebel, instead of standing alongside Marvel as industry leader, Malibu finds itself in the middle. Neither a rebel nor a giant, Malibu has become a mere graveyard for Marvel. The staff at Malibu deserves more to work with than Marvel's Black Knight or Loki. If they had more, they could do better. For the fans, for retailers, and for the people whose jobs depend on it, **Vantage** hopes **The All New Exiles** and this relaunch will turn out to be a step in the right direction.

FIREARM TO GET SUPER SOLDIER SERUM

Malibu's Firearm will somehow ingest Captain America's super soldier serum, **Vantage** has learned. Sources close to Malibu indicate that Firearm will be a member of the UltraForce/Avengers team, during its short tenure, and that he will take the same serum that gave Captain America his powers. The UltraForce/Avengers storyline is said to move beyond the current crossover.

DOUBLE IMPACT #3 LOOKS LIKE A WINNER

Double Impact #1, from brand new small publisher High Impact, blew out its 50,000 copy print run in weeks. Without anyone having ever heard of the new artist or publisher, this chromium-covered book was one of the hottest books at the Chicago Comicon this summer.

The keys to Double Impact's success are many. First, artist Ricky Carralero stands out as an excellent artist. At Image he might get lost in the shuffle, but on an independent book his work sticks out like a sore thumb — a very beautiful sore thumb. **Vantage** would not be surprised if a **Double Impact** book starts to hit the top ten lists soon.

The company also continues to pursue an aggressive marketing plan. **Double Impact** #3 will have a lot going for it. First of all, there will be a back up story featuring the first appearance of Nikki Blade. This "bad girl" character will be getting her own title late in the Fall. Next, the book will be "print to order run only," and "no reorders will be taken after July 17," spokesman John Ulloa told **Vantage.** Finally, there will be a variant edition of #3 featuring a cover with a new two-character team called "Blondage." This variant will be mixed in with the general run at random, and it will be limited to just 3000 books.

All of the art on both editions will be by Carralero, but he turns #4 over to newcomer David Germain. **Vantage** has yet to see Germain's artwork. **Double Impact** #4 will pit Blondage against the book's regular characters, China and Jazz.

China & Jazz™ & © 1995 High Impact

MAJOR "BAD GIRL" CROSS-OVER

Lightning Comics and High Impact Studios will be crossing over their "bad girls," Hellina and Double Impact. High Impact's China and Jazz are the two heroines that make up the Double Impact "team."

Just as some dealers have started to speculate that the "bad girl" craze may soon come to an end, Lightning and High Impact have introduced this new, untested concept — a crossover between two hot female characters from independent publishers. **Vantage** believes that this could be the start of a new, successful trend. Indeed, **Vantage** has heard rumblings of additional crossovers between "bad girls" now being negotiated between independent publishers.

The crossovers will be titled **Hellina / Double Impact #1** (from Lightning) and **Double Impact / Hellina #1** (High Impact Studios) and are scheduled to release in January 1996 from both publishers. Both books will be in full color. Plans have been made for a nude edition from each publisher as well.

Each publisher hopes to grow readership and expand their retailer base with the publicity from the crossover. "Both Lightning Comics and High Impact Studios are very excited about this crossover and the friendly competition between both publishers," said Lightning Publisher Steve Zyskoski. "We plan to put everything we've got into this project. High Impact Studios was an unexpected hit with great sales on **Double Impact #1**. Hellina's sales have been increasing every month since the first issue released back in September, 1994."

This is the first crossover for either Lightning or High Impact. Both companies hope to do so again with at least one other publisher in 1996, said Zyskowski.

STARMAN IS ANOTHER NEAR-VERTIGO HIT

Vantage told you about the growing heat for **Spectre** a few months ago — well, **Starman** is in many ways a sister-book to **Spectre.** Both books have a Vertigo feel to them, but neither is a Vertigo book. Since both are part of the DC universe, they have access to DC history, but can also explore the same kinds of sophisticated themes that Vertigo books do. "**Spectre** and **Starman** bridge the gap between Vertigo and the DC universe," one DC staffer told **Vantage.**

Like its sister **Spectre, Starman** has a growing fan following. Under-ordered by dealers, the first few issues are basically impossible to find. At the Chicago Comicon in July, **Vantage** was unable to find a single copy of **Starman #1.** Just bringing up the book inspired dealers to start talking about how the fan base has grown. "It has really taken off," remarked one dealer.

James Robinson's storytelling is strong. The covers are usually painted, exceptional works of art. **Starman** is the story of a regular guy trying to fill his dad's shoes ... his dad being the original golden age Starman. The neat thing about this book is that it actually manages to convey that Starman is just a regular guy. So many titles try to do this with so many characters — from Peter Parker to Clark Kent. Robinson gives this new Starman the personality of a guy next door, not some pompous hero.

Watch for a Starman trade paperback, reprinting #0-5 in November. Also in the Fall, the **Starman** series will make serious use of its DC universe membership. Look for the series to play host to one of the villains who gets beefed up by the Underworld mini.

For enjoyable reading and for high turnover in the back issue bins, **Vantage** highly recommends **Starman.**

VANTAGE OPENS WEB SITE ON THE INTERNET

Vantage-Golub Communications, publishers of **Vantage Comic & Card Picks**, various signed comics, and other products for fans and dealers, has opened a "world wide web" site on the Internet.

Internet users who have access to the world wide web can now visit **Vantage's** picturesque and interactive Internet site. While most comic-related web sites have been rather text-heavy, **Vantage's** site relies heavily on pictures and a true user-friendly set-up.

File Edit Options Navigate Annotate
Vantage Home Page
Vantage Home Page
URL: http://www.insv.com:80/vantage/
Data Transfer Complete
VANTAGE
COMIC & CARD PICKS
Vantage-Golub Communications, Inc. is the newest one source in comics for dealer advice and
comic-related products for fans! Vantage offers a monthly newsletter with full sum
mary list picks (with a killer track record), a monthly magazine for dealers and collectors, and signed
comic books from top publishers like Marvel, DC, and Image.
You can even view new hot news and picks free of charge! Hey fans and dealers, put your feet up and
check out some of our past news and picks.
Welcome to the wacky comic-infested world of Vantage, where we get the news out fast enough for
dealers who need to know and where customer service is KING!
-Latest Comic News And Picks!
-This month's reader's poll
-Contest! Win A Fantastic Four #48

The site offers fans the opportunity to order **Vantage** products directly from the company. For example, signed and numbered copies of **Sovereign Seven** #2 may be ordered right from any home computer. Also, fans can enter a contest to win **Fantastic Four** #48.

Our most timely news and some picks will be made available at the site on a monthly basis, but not the complete magazine. Retailers can also order **Vantage** directly at competitive discounts.

Fans can also participate in a survey covering the latest in comics — and they'll see the results instantly. One survey question asks people for their opinion on the coming Iron Man / Clone storyline. The site is also a prelude to **Vantage's** coming paper magazine covering comics and the Internet, **Starship Online Magazine.** The site can be visited at the following address: http://www.insv.com/vantage

HOW DO DEALERS KNOW WHAT'S HOT BEFORE I DO?

VANTAGE™
COMIC & CARD PICKS

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMIC DEALERS AND SERIOUS COLLECTORS!

S7 Crossover

Sovereign Seven will soon feature a major DC universe crossover. Who will be crossing over is a "big secret," said creator Chris Claremont.

On **Sovereign Seven**, Claremont said, "It's everything certain other books haven't been for four years."

Independent Publisher Snags Big Names For Covers

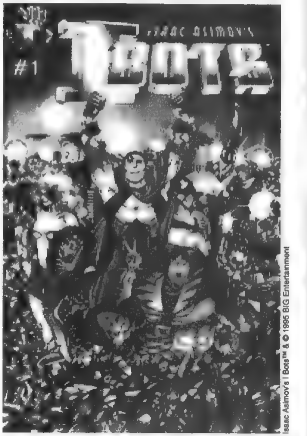
Little-known Midnight Press is throwing some serious money around, and it has grabbed **Vantage's** attention. First, the independent publisher made the unusual move of signing on Top Dog Marketing, a respected publicity firm in the comics industry that handles major accounts like SkyBox.

Now, Top Dog has announced that Boris Vallejo will be doing the cover to Midnight's **Alister the Slayer** #1, and that Quesada and Palmiotti are scheduled to do the cover to #3.

Maxx/Gen 13 One Shot

A **Maxx/Gen 13** one shot is now on the WildStorm schedule for December. As for the regular **Gen 13** series, look for an 8-issue story arc from Alan Moore.

Gen-13 ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. and Wildstorm Productions, 1995



Isaac Asimov's Robots™ & © 1995 BIG Entertainment

Tekno•Comix Is On The Net

Big Entertainment is to be included on the Sci Fi Channel's web site on the Internet, Big announced.

Big's TeknoNation section will feature on-line comic strips, artwork, celebrity interviews, and news and new information. Internet users who have web access can get there by heading over to http://www.scifi.com. For more on Sci Fi and the Internet, turn to **Vantage's Starship Online** magazine, due out next Winter.

Simonsons Do Gen 13

WildStorm will be a four-issue mini-anthology series from Image. Gen 13 will be featured in the first issue in a story by Louise and Walter Simonson.

Green Lantern and Silver Surfer

Look for another DC/Marvel crossover in your future — Green Lantern and Silver Surfer will meet in an as yet unannounced crossover. These heroes were meant for each other, you know it. Hal will make an appearance in the crossover, but not as Green Lantern. Thanos will also be involved.

Giant Cartoon Art Museum To Open In Florida

A major new museum devoted to cartoon art, including comic books, is set to open in South Florida in 1996. The International Museum of Cartoon Art is moving from its small New York area home to become the first world-class museum of cartoon art.

The new fifteen million dollar museum is now under construction in Boca Raton, Florida. Ironically located just a few miles from Tekno*Comix headquarters, the museum will be a 52,000 square foot facility with 25 galleries, a cartoon Hall of Fame, classrooms, a 200 seat theater, a studio, a library, a cartoon playground, and a large gift shop.

The gift shop is already open. Only part of the first floor will be open in 1996, followed by the whole thing in 1997. Both comic books and vintage comic pages will be on display at the museum, as well as a display on how color comics are printed.

Darkseid Is Everywhere

Darkseid is to get quite a bit of play at DC in the coming months. Byrne's first four **Wonder Woman** issues will involve Darkseid. He will also appear in **Superman** and the Darkseid vs. Galactus crossover is also still on the schedule.

When asked why all the Darkseid, DC staffers have seemed to avoid the question. **Vantage** has a funny feeling about this — we bet Darkseid will become increasingly important in the coming months of DC storytelling. Of all places, this baddie's first appearance is in **Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen** #134. Also see Kirby's old **The Forever People** and **The New Gods** for other early Darkseid appearances. To (possibly) add more fuel to the Darkseid fire, **The New Gods** is being relaunched this summer. Hmmmm...

Zealot Mini Due Out

Wild-Storm's "bad girl" Zealot is featured in a new, unusual type of miniseries. Each issue is set in a different time period: one in feudal Japan, one in ancient Greece, and another in a more modern world. Fans will meet a villain that has been a thorn in Zealot's side for centuries.

Zealot ®, ™ & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions, 1995

Starman/Sandman Crossover

Now in the works is a Starman/Sandman Mystery Theater Crossover. This will be a rare DC universe crossover with a Vertigo title.

Upcoming Spectre

Spectre continues to remain a very popular book, and the storyline that John Ostrander has lined up for the future should only add fuel to the fire. The Spectre will turn his attention to hopes and dreams that have been killed, as opposed to people that have been killed. That is, say you hope for a better life and someone else destroys it. The Spectre will show the destroyer what his victim is going through. This sounds to **Vantage** like a fascinating twist.

Ash Gets Double Cover And More

Event Comics' **Ash** from Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti has been doing nicely in the back issue market, and **Vantage** expects more success for Event's continued aggressive marketing plans.

Ash #5 will feature a wraparound cover by the Hildebrandt Brothers and it will contain the first appearance of the Hildebrandts' first creator-owned character. Here's the real scoop: Underneath the Hildebrandts' cover will be a second cover by Quesada and Palmiotti, and the Hildebrandts *paint their character each time it appears in the book!*

Ash #6 will lead into **Ash** #0 which is to have a wraparound chromium cover by Palmiotti and Quesada. **Ash** #6 will have an alternate cover by Mark Texiera — the breakdown is to be announced. Also, this Winter look for an Event Comics pinup book with art from various top talents in the industry.

Ash™ & © 1995 Invisible College Inc

Pop Entertainment Gets Marilyn Monroe By Deodato

The back cover to Pop Entertainment's **Marilyn Monroe** is to feature a piece by Mike Deodato. The Marilyn Monroe piece was not solicited. In other news, Pop Entertainment President Adam Post reports that Diamond has now declined to carry Pop products. Pop Entertainment plans to replace some of the lost revenue by pursuing a direct-to-retailer campaign that had already been planned for some time.

Extreme Launches Black Mermaid

Here's an interesting one. Extreme is working on a Disney-style comic with an adult theme and adult content. The painted mini will look like Aladdin or the Little Mermaid at first glance, but it will be for more mature readers. Extreme expects that the four issues will take about a year for the artist to paint, and the company says that it will not offer the first issue until the fourth one is done.

London Night Drops Smaller Distributors

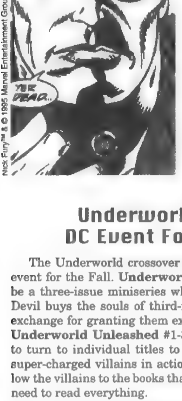
London Night Studios, publishers of **Razor,** issued a statement as follows: "With the books shipping in July, London Night will only be offering product through the following distributors ... Diamond, Capital City, and Cavalcade Dist. The latter is a new distributor that has a main goal to secure the outlet and availability of hot, up-and-coming companies in today's marketplace."

Paramount To Publish Comics?

Paramount Pictures is considering starting their own comic book publishing company, **Vantage** has learned. DC Comics' licensing expires at the end of the year, so we may not see any more **Star Trek** or **Star Trek: The Next Generation** comics in 1996 until Paramount gets things rolling. How this will affect Malibu's **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** remains to be seen. We have yet to see a **Star Trek: Voyager** comic — perhaps Paramount has been sitting on it in anticipation of their new publishing venture.

New X-Men Dollar Book By Schiller

Marvel is introducing five new titles with 99 cent cover prices, at the request of retailers who say their customers need lower-priced items to chose from. In September, for example, **The Adventures of the Uncanny X-Men** ships. The book is written by Fred Schiller, who provides fans with an unusual look at the early adventures of the X-Men — through the eyes of the characters who were there. In the debut issue Jean Grey joins the X-Men as they battle Magneto for the very first time.



Nick Fury™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Nick Fury Killed?

The following is unconfirmed at this time. **Vantage** hears that Nick Fury is killed in **Double Edge Omega** from Marvel. Marvel had promised that a major character would die, and it looks like Fury may be the one to bite the dust!

Underworld Is DC Event For Fall

The Underworld crossover will be DC's major event for the Fall. **Underworld Unleashed** will be a three-issue miniseries where (basically) the Devil buys the souls of third-rate DC villains in exchange for granting them extreme power. After **Underworld Unleashed** #1-3, fans will be able to turn to individual titles to see each of the 25 super-charged villains in action. You can just follow the villains to the books that interest you — no need to read everything.

This sounds like a great promotion to **Vantage**, featuring the pluses of a crossover without many of the negatives. The crappy villains may keep orders low for **Underworld Unleashed** #1-3, while the crossovers that follow could create serious back-issue demand. Mark Waid is the writer of this project, which is due out in September.

DC logo™ & © 1995 DC Comics

Malibu Comics' Founders Leave

Two of the original founders of Malibu Comics, who helped start Malibu from the back room of a comic shop in 1986, are leaving the company.

After having stayed with Malibu even after the sale to Marvel, VP of Marketing Tom Mason and VP of Editorial Chris Ulm are leaving Malibu — possibly to compete with it. Mason and Ulm, who both were major forces in pushing Malibu past other independents into the big leagues, will create a new entertainment-oriented company. The company will explore new business opportunities, including comic books.

Scott Rosenberg, President of Malibu Comics, stated, "While I hate to see them leave, I'm excited about their new prospects and we look forward to developing future projects together."

Mason and Ulm have given the ninety days of notice required by their employment contracts. They declined to discuss their plans until after they leave Malibu, although Mason did say he still has some ownership interest in Malibu. In a statement, Malibu pledges its "full support" of Mason and Ulm's new venture.

Marvels-style books

In the tradition of **Marvels**, DC will soon publish **Kingdom Come,** a painted look at the DC Universe. Planned for late 1995 or early 1996, **Kingdom Come** is rendered by Alex Ross and is written by Mark Waid. Image's **Astro City** will be yet another Marvels-style book.

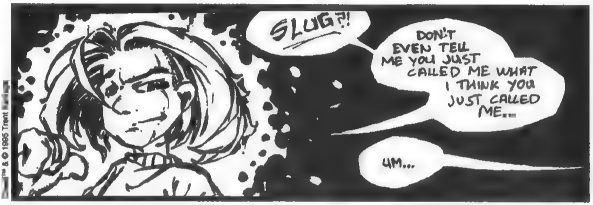
Marvels was a huge, unexpected success for retailers, and we can expect strong fan response for the Image and DC versions this time as well.

Outcast Coming From Acclaim

The Outcast, a new hero premiering from Acclaim Comics, makes his debut in August in **The Outcast Special.**

The Outcast is the story of Lenny, a young man left with permanent brain damage after an accident. This same accident releases an alien presence from his DNA. Because of this, Lenny learns he can transform into **The Outcast** whenever he chooses. However, the alien that also inhabits Lenny's body isn't too happy about this and thus the stage is set for their story and combined adventures.

"**The Outcast** is not a typical superhero story, but more of a tale of a character struggling with both internal and external conflicts," says Bob Layton, Editor-in-Chief of Acclaim Comics.



Slug™ & © 1995 Trent Kanuka

Creed Takes Off

This is the part where we say I told you so. Well, we did. Having covered it when no one had ever heard of a **Creed** before, **Vantage** has watched the bigger mags turn to **Creed** as well. At the Chicago Comicon, Creator Trent Kanuka often had a line at his booth, with fans asking for autographs and artists asking for advice. Kanuka himself feels that **Vantage** was the spark that started the fire. "You started my career," Kanuka told **Vantage** Publisher Rob Golub.

ShadowHawk Dies Of Aids

ShadowHawk, the super hero created by Jim Valentino, fights his final battle with the AIDS virus in **ShadowHawk** #18.

Even super heroes aren't immune to the deadly ravages of the AIDS virus, as Valentino has demonstrated in his **ShadowHawk** title. There is a message behind the AIDS storyline, as Valentino states, "As a father I am concerned with the future of not only my children, but the future of **all** children to come. I want as many people as possible to be aware of AIDS and to join in the fight against it. You don't need superpowers to fight AIDS, you just need to fight."

Aqualad To Lose The Lad

Aqualad will lose the "lad"! That is, he'll get a new, more-grown-up name, **Vantage** has learned.

Everett Hartsoe of London Night Studios

Batman Forever Breaks The Record

Batman Forever, the new movie featuring the Dark Knight, broke all previous opening weekend box office records with an astonishing $52.7 million debut.

The movie, which played on 2,842 screens, earned an average $18,573 per theater over the weekend. The three Batman films to date claim 3 of the industry's top 5 opening weekends: 1989's **Batman** opened with $42.7 million and **Batman Returns** earned $47.7 million in 1992.

Sovereign Seven™ & © Chris Claremont

Sovereign Seven Plans

Sovereign Seven's second major story arc will introduce the group's first major super-villain. The entire group will also eventually visit Gotham City. Claremont says he plans to "start the same roller coaster ride I started at another company."

DC's New Gods Rise Again

August sees the debut of a different breed of super heroes as **The New Gods** return to the DC universe.

Jack "King" Kirby debuted **The New Gods** in 1970 and, in so doing, started a new heroic mythology for DC Comics. Having been low profile for awhile, with an occasional appearance, **The New Gods** rise again in an ongoing series of their own.

As the series opens, Darkseid, the lord of Apokolips, gives up in his search for the Anti-Life Equation in favor of a better prize: The Source, a power that binds the warring worlds of **The New Gods** universe. Orion, the son of Darkseid, finds his beloved home, New Genesis (and the rest of the DC universe), in extreme danger. Because of this, he resolves to stop his father and thwart his plans.

Look for the debut of **The New Gods** from DC in August.

Ice Age Hits Canada

Wizards of the Coast, the makers of Magic: The Gathering and other popular items, premiered its new **Ice Age** cards in a tournament in Toronto, Canada, at the Canadian Comic & Cards Spectacular June 3-4.

Approximately 650 people turned out for the tournament and premiere of the newest addition to Wizard's popular card games. **Ice Age** wasn't released until a few days after the tournament, so the players were excited to be able to participate. "Since **Ice Age** wasn't officially released until several days after the tournament, expectations were high," said Gabriel Alonso, **Ice Age** Tournament Director. "Before we handed out the cards, players were banging on the tables, chanting, and doing the wave."

Catfight and Hellina Crossover

Lightning Comics **Hellina** will team up with Insomnia Press' **Catfight** to battle the Prince of Somnia. Steven Zyskowski, co-publisher of Lightning Comics and Insomnia Press (a Lightning-owned imprint) had this to say of the team-up: "I'm really excited about this comic. Catfight and Hellina have some unfinished business that goes back to Catfight's first appearance in **Fury of Hellina** #1. Hellina is Lightning's most popular title and I'm sure her fans will make plenty of room in their collection for this landmark issue. I also believe this is a great opportunity for Catfight to gain increased exposure."

In the issue, the two heroines must challenge and defeat the Prince of Somnia and his horde of evil Odiums, or be forever trapped in his nightmare realm. A pin-up gallery is included in the crossover and a nude version is being solicited as well. Both are due for an October release.

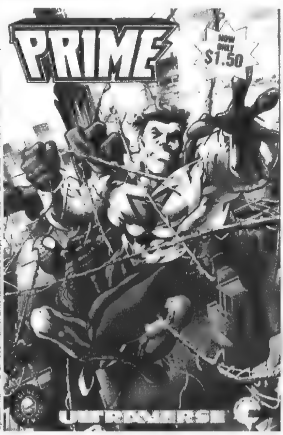
Hellina™ & © 1995 Joseph A. Zyskowski

Prime Meets Spidey In Black September

Continuing with the crossover between Marvel characters and Ultraverse characters, Prime will meet Spider-Man and the newly revitalized Lizard in **Prime** #∞.

The story is a result of the **Avengers/ UltraForce** crossover in August and certain things will be happening to main characters. "We're talking Prime and Spider-Man here!" said Ultraverse Editor Hank Kanalz. "Many of our fans have been demanding crossovers with major Marvel characters. In August, UltraForce meets the Avengers. In September, Prime meets Spider-Man."

The issue also sets up a new **Prime** series debuting in October.



Spider-Man™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. "Prime"™ & © 1995 MidBoy Comics Entertainment, Inc.

Worf May Join Deep Space Nine

The rumors are true. Current plans call for Lt. Worf, from Star Trek: The Next Generation, to move aboard the Deep Space Nine space station.

Sources indicate that Worf will take up a permanent spot on the **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** television show. Odo will remain Security Chief for the civilian side, while Worf will handle any security problems on the Federation side.

Vantage Picked 'Em First

A recent issue of Overstreet's new but highly regarded **Fan** magazine features a list of popular titles that are heating up the back-issue market. **Vantage** is proud to say we picked most of them to be hits long ago.

Of the 15 titles listed as the "Fan 15" in **Fan** #2, 11 of them were previous **Vantage** picks. They are: **Gen 13** #1 (regular series and mini-series) & #2, **X-Files** # 1 & #2, **Shi** #1 & #5, **X-Man** #1, **Wonder Woman** #85, **Maxx** #1, and **X-Men: Alpha**.

All of these books were **Vantage** picks before they came out. The moral of our story? **Vantage** is cool.

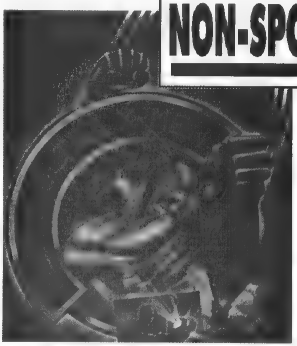
Bill Tucci Thanks His Fans

"We continue to receive wonderful letters from our fans, and I promise those of you who have written that I will try to answer each of you personally, however long that takes," Bill Tucci said in a statement. "We seem to have hit a nerve—Ana's quest seems to be as meaningful to you as it is to me, and I can't tell you how much I appreciate the way you've made my book the phenom of 1994 and 1995. Thanks for being there for us."

Tucci went on to say that Crusade will continue to grow and create terrific new comics and that he and his company will be forging a bright path ahead. "We're determined to be at the forefront of this business, and we intend to be a leader, not a follower."

Brian Pulido and Jimmy Palmiotti

NON-SPORTS PICKS



X-Men, Wolverine ™ & © 1995 Marvel Ent. Group, Inc.

VANTAGE Card Picks

- Gen 13 Chromium Trading Cards
- Ultra Babylon 5 Cards
- Coca-Cola Super Premium Cards

BATTLE OF THE CHROME

If we've learned nothing else in the past year, we should learn one very important lesson: collectors like chromium cards. A lot.

A second lesson we haven't quite absorbed yet, mostly because we like denying reality: chromium cards cost more. A lot more.

There has really been only one runaway comic success lately that wasn't tied to bad girls, and that's been **Gen 13**. Okay, so there's a lot of good girl art, but the girls are basically nice teenagers. Sure, the plot twists with certain female characters are a bit of a surprise in a comic that seems aimed at young teens, but parents aren't going to object to Fairchild and friends the way they instantly dislike Lady Death and her fiend Ernie. Some of the hottest cards in the WildStorm sets have been the Gen 13 cards, and now they get their own set. Shipped with seven cards to a pack, 107 cards make up the basic set, but there is an interesting additional subset - it makes up an 18-panel comic! The first level of chase cards is a nine-card motion set (probably something like the wiggle cards from the Simpsons). The second is no doubt more interesting for collectors since it contains nine glow-in-the-dark chromium cards. (Sure, Evil Ernie's set was glow-in-the-dark, but this is Gen 13!) WildStorm has shown that it understands how to use chromium to enhance cards, and their track record with artwork for their cards is second to none. The only downside to these cards is the price level - about $3 a pack. The box price is kept low by the now familiar lower pack count (24 packs). For true Gen fans this won't be a problem, but a lot of casual collectors will be left on the sidelines. Their loss - **Vantage** expects these cards to simply get more expensive with time.

Gen 13 ™ & © 1995 Aegis Ent., Inc.

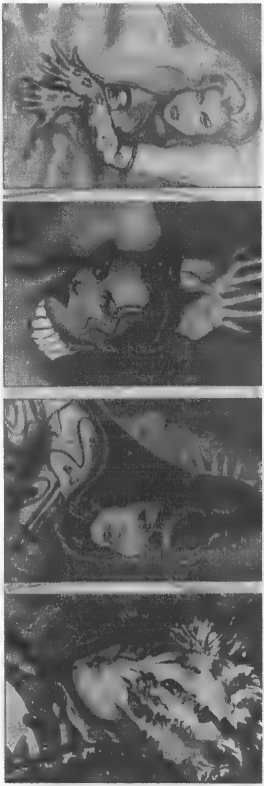
The top franchise at Marvel is clearly the X-Men, and the sets have

The title makes it clear that here there be cheesecake.

been coming out closer and closer to each other. Once upon a time they were once a year, but then Fleer got into the X-card business. The first Fleer set shipped in January 1994, then the 1995 set shipped in November of 1994, and now we have a set of all-chromium X-Men cards shipping in September 1995. **Vantage** won't be surprised if we continue to see an X-set every ten months (it's left as an exercise for the reader to calculate which year gets two sets). Every X-Men card set issued has gone up in value, and most boxes are expensive if you can even find them. These cards start out a wee bit too expensive - about $3 for a pack of eight cards (a familiar price point), but with 36 packs to a box, these will start out quite a bit more expensive for a box than most kids have a hope of saving up. The price shouldn't matter too much (after all, this is THE X-MEN), but **Vantage** is worried. Most of the card samples displayed so far just seem somewhat bland, and it doesn't seem like the chromium is doing much more than coating the card. Go easy on these cards unless the artwork turns out to be better than we expect.

The set is mercifully only 100 cards, and once again there is a signature set that mirrors it. Only needing about thirteen packs for a set puts that price at about $25, and makes it less necessary to buy boxes (**Vantage** expects a lot of customers to come running to dealers trying to sell back the two extra sets they get in their box). There are only two chase card sets this time, the embossed Age of Apocalypse set (one in every other pack for a total of twenty) and a nine-card set of Holoflash cards (six per box). Clearly the Holoflash cards will be in heavy demand, but the excess sets floating around could work against dealers - it will NOT pay to bust down boxes to get the chase cards because of the tremendous number of excess sets floating around (they won't be able to sell the sets, and nobody wants to pay more than $2-$5 for the chase cards, so you can't make money that way either).

The original non-sports chromium sets came from Comic Images, and this month they release another one, Olivia: Studies in Sensuality. This all-new chromium set will no doubt be yet another hit with the art lovers, especially since the title makes it clear that here there be cheesecake. At $2 a pack these are much cheaper than the competition, although there is a more limited market. Chase sets again include MagnaChrome, medal-



Art ™ & © 1995 Olivia De Berardinis

Batman, Robin, Riddler ™ & © 1995 DC Comics

lion, and autographed cards, and dealers should have no problem selling sets or chase cards.

A LONG-TERM VIEW FROM THE FRONTIER

Some of the best collectibles come from shows or movies that aren't overnight success stories, and Fleer is coming out with a set that matches that description - the Babylon 5 trading cards. The syndicated television show started out slow, but has gradually revealed a much more complex and carefully thought-out story line than fans were expecting (much of the confusion that greeted viewers early on turned out to be carefully plotted background material that is just now starting to pay off). As big as the audience for this show is, **Vantage** expects it to grow over time, particularly once the daily reruns show up someplace. (Hello? Sci-Fi Channel? Are you listening?) **Vantage** thinks that this card set is actually a little premature, but that's good news for people who have a few extra boxes or sets stashed away when the demand starts to build later on. One of the important reasons **Vantage** likes this set is that it comes from Fleer, who routinely doesn't overprint their card sets. Since dealers aren't geared up for the kind of demand that Star Wars and Star Trek command, the long-term demand for these cards will easily outstrip the clearly inadequate supply. The base card set is 120 strong, and the chase cards pose an unusual problem for Fleer: one set is much more uncommon than normal. A 36-pack box will [illegible]ly supply a complete set of the eight Lee McLeod painted chase cards and a complete set of the eight Prismatic Foil chase cards, but the eight holograms only appear once in every 12 packs, so it will take nearly three boxes to make up a complete set of them - this is much rarer than normal for Fleer, and you may well find a dealer who is asleep at the switch and obtain them cheaply if you do so before the guides start reflecting their scarcity.

MORE COLA WARS

Collect-A-Card promised that the Coca-Cola series four would be the last set of the Coke cards, and it appears that they were sort of right - now they are bringing out the first series of the Super Premium Coca-Cola cards. The cards are the 24 point stock which helped raise prices for the Fleer Flair sets, but this is offset by the smaller set (only 60 cards). Be on the lookout for the Polar Bear stickers that are stuck on the boxes, as the WildStorm set showed us that these kinds of stickers can be valuable, and start your collection of six oversized (5"x8") cards that are inserted once per box. There is a ten-card Polar Bear chase set (only two per box), but the big winner cards are the redemption cards for 24K gold Ty Cobb chase cards. The Coke collectors will be ecstatic to have something new to throw money at, even at $3 a pack.

The second set of Pepsi cards is coming out in September as well. Dart Flipcards did a decent job on the first set, including some interesting chase cards, but the demand for the second tier of cola cards simply doesn't compare. On the plus side, you can buy a box for less than a buck a

Groo ™ & © 1995 Sergio Aragones

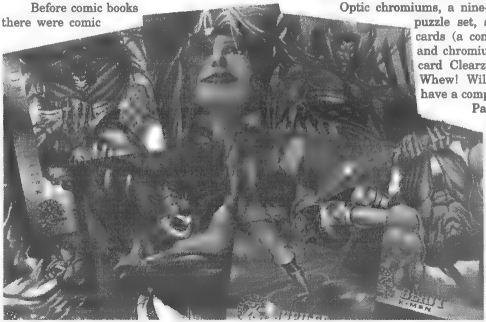
pack, and nowadays that's a price that refreshes.

TOO FAR BACK TO OUR ROOTS?

Before comic books there were comic strips, and Authentix has staked out some of that territory for their card sets. This month they release their second set of Beetle Bailey cards, the World War II Edition, and their first set of Blondie cards. The setup is identical: a fifty-card set, five silver chase cards, five very tough to find gold cards (that all come in one pack), and a limit of 5000 boxes. In each case there is an alternative to boxes: a set that includes the fifty cards, the five silver chase cards, a binder, and a certificate of authenticity (for more money you can get an autograph as well). Most collectors would be much better served with the sets, especially since they include the binder and chases and cost less than a box. **Vantage** wishes them well, and hopes for more sets to come (although demand for these cards has to come from a portion of the consumer base that isn't even looking for cards yet).

SPECULATIVE CORNER

There is one more chromium set this month, and **Vantage** is actually looking forward to it more than any of the others: the Cyberforce Chromium Cards from Topps. Cyberforce has been overlooked for too long, but the fan demand for **Cyblade #1** shows that the potential for sales is definitely there. A box has only 24 packs of five cards each, and the insert list is nearly heartbreaking: 18 Cyber-Optic chromiums, a nine-card Cyberforce puzzle set, six CyberMatrix cards (a combination of foil and chromium), and a three card Clearzone picture set. Whew! Will anybody ever have a complete set?



X-Men ™ & © 1995 Marvel Ent. Group, Inc.

Packs are less expensive than the other chromium entries this month (about $2.50), and the small box translates to a price of $50.00 ... but **Vantage** expects to be happier with the art on this set than any of the

other major sets, and only the "sure thing" chromium sets offered this month keep this from being a top pick. This set could well be a sleeper, particularly with all the attention being paid to the Gen 13 and X-Men sets, so be sure to check it out yourself as soon as it hits the stores - the boxes may be gone before you can pack out a set.

QUICK NOTES

FPG has two more art sets this month. The first is the Jim Steranko Fantastic Art Cards, from an artist who turned out some of the most memorable Captain America and Nick Fury: Agent of Shield covers ever done (back when the comics were briefly referred to as Pop-Art Productions). Steranko's career has included a large number of book covers as well, and these cards should appeal to fans of many different kinds of art. The Joe DeVito Fantasy Art cards feature an artist who has done cards for the Superman: Man of Steel card set, the Fleer Spider-Man card set, and lots of Doc Savage book covers. The sets offer five or six metallic chase cards and a chance at one of 1,000 autograph cards.

If you enjoy the (Groo) comic, you simply must pick up the joke-laden cards, even if only for a chance at an original sketch.

Over a year ago, SkyBox first started promoting their Master Series cards, featuring artwork from Julie Bell, Brom, Dave Dorman, Dave McKean, and Brian Stelfreeze. Each was allowed to create some new comic characters, and along the way a CD-ROM game was created (although it won't ship until a month after the cards). Will SkyBox succeed in promoting a set of cards featuring new comic characters? Several earlier attempts failed, and **Vantage** can't help but worry that nothing about this package will help beat the odds against this try.

Remember Mr. Wizard? He's actually still around, but he looks his age. Younger kids might be more interested in Bill Nye, The Science Guy, and Fleer is producing a card set built around his show. The cards include flash cards, pop-out cards for a Solar System mobile, the periodic chart, do-it-yourself experiments, and several chase sets (including the five-card Cracked Egg set, which features yet another new kind of card).

Groo has been featured in Epic comics, Marvel comics, and now Image comics, and most people have ignored him. The ads from WildStorm invite you to ignore the card set as well. If you enjoy the comics, you simply must pick up the joke-laden cards, even if only to have a chance at an original sketch or an autographed card. Besides, nine of the chase cards feature "Groomium" cards. Just what we need this month.

Gen 13 ™ & © 1995 Aegis Ent., Inc.

Creed™ & © 1995 Trent Kaniuga

SIGNED BY TRENT KANIUGA!

LIMITED UNDER 750 COPIES!

$12.00 ARE WE CRAZY???

Vantage has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics — we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

1) You must use the coupon provided- no copies.

2) If we receive over 750 orders we will return checks at random (sorry, we have no choice)!

OFFER EXPIRES SEPT. 15, 1995.

Comics You Want...

VANTAGE *Signature Series*

CREED #1

(Lightning Comics One-Shot)

Vantage offered Creed once before as part of our signature series, but we still have quite a few copies left. We figured you might like a second offering since things have changed since we last offered Creed #1. Since getting coverage in some of those slower, bigger, more widely-read mags, Creed has really taken off..But before Creed and young Trent Kaniuga became famous, **Vantage** wisely signed the guy up to participate in the signature series for the benefit of our readers! Creed is truly different. We urge you pick up this book, if not here, then somewhere else. It's a neat read, and it's got a bright future.

☐ Yes, I'd like *Creed #1*, personally signed by artist Trent Kaniuga, limited to 750 produced by **Vantage**, with accompanying certificate of authenticity! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 750 copies, my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

Enclosed is $12.00 + $1.95 (shipping)= $13.95 total
Canadian orders add 40%. All other foreign, add U.S. $2.00.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, & ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Please send check or money order with this coupon (no copies) to:

Vantage Signature Series, Dept. Creed
13000 W. Blue Mound Road, #110
Elm Grove, WI 53122

COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller

I'm Batman. Well, not quite, but it really impresses the women when I tell them that. At least I think it does - if I'm judging their hysterical laughter and pointing correctly. But how can they not be impressed, considering that **Batman Forever** made a cool $53 million dollars in its first weekend. And by the time you read this, the money it makes will probably be able to pay off the national debt. Well, it deserves every penny it gets.

Rebounding from the grim and depressing outlook of its predecessor, **Batman Returns**, the new movie is faster, brighter, and full of new stuff. For this outing of the Dark Knight, Tim Burton steps away from the director's chair to make way for Joel Schumacher, who brings a breath of fresh air into the series. On the tail end of that breath comes the new Bruce Wayne/Batman, Val Kilmer, who everyone remembers as the snot-nosed pilot in competition with Tom Cruise and Anthony Edwards in Top Gun. Kilmer brings a younger version of

the millionaire to the screen, a version that while still moody, has a bit of a quirky humor to it. In this writer's opinion, he makes a better Batman than Michael Keaton did. And it also doesn't hurt that he has an excellent supporting cast behind him.

> It has a lot of the spirit of not only the comic, but Batman the Animated Series.

And quite the star-studded cast it is! You have Nicole Kidman as the love interest du jour who is fascinated by both the Batman and the man behind the mask. Of course, a Batman movie wouldn't be complete without a few villains: Tommy Lee Jones who portrays Harvey Dent - aka Two-Face - and mega-mega-mega-star Jim Carrey as the Riddler. Jones plays Two-Face a little more maniacal than he's portrayed in the comics, and although everyone says Carrey steals the show, he really doesn't. (Hey! I'm not bashing him. Heck, I saw **Dumb and Dumber** twice.)

The person who really steals the show is

Chris O'Donnell, who portrays spunky Dick Grayson, who we all know is Robin. O'Donnell definitely gives an edge to this character that isn't seen in the comics. He blames himself, as well as Batman, for the death of his family. He has to fight Wayne in order to become his sidekick. He has an earring. He joy rides around Gotham City in the Batmobile. He's definitely wilder than his comic book counterpart.

The movie is nonstop action. Five minutes don't pass without something being destroyed, or someone fighting someone else. But, unlike the ugly, disturbing violence of **Batman Returns**, no one really gets hurt and very little blood is shown spilled. It has a lot of the spirit of not only the comic, but **Batman, the Animated Series**. In addition to this, there are within the movie little in-jokes for the comic aficionados in the audience to laugh about and make the person in the next seat look at them strangely.

The movie has it all. Action, adventure, romance, nipples on Batman's and Robin's uniforms. How much more could you want for six dollars. And face it, Batman is what other superhero movies are trying to be. Why not see the movie that started all the comic movie hype.

Spandex Tights
Lost Cause
$1.95

I'm Flex-Woman. Well, not really but it ... excuse me? I used that opening line already? Man, no wonder the women are all staring at me that way. Anyway, remember the Kroft Superstar Show back in the mid-'70s on ABC? I remember it for two reasons. One reason is that it was in the building that now houses CNN (at least I think that was the building). The other reason I remember it is because of a little show-within-the-show called **Electra-Woman and Dyna-Girl** starring **Days of Our Lives** star Diedre Hall. (Not the greatest career move in her life, but I digress.) The show, while trying to be serious and kind of feed off of the **Wonder Woman** series hype, was really campy.

Fast forward to the 1990s and the era of the Bad Girl comic: scantily clad women with overdrawn, ahem, features, and weapons that Sly Stallone couldn't carry on a good day. Three wild and crazy guys, Bryan Glass, Sky Owens, and Chris Fry, decide to write a parody of Bad Girls, and superhero comics in general. Lo' and behold, Flex-Women and Spandex-Girl are created, Spandex Tights becomes a semi-hit, and I get flashbacks of Electra-Woman and Dyna-Girl because the show and the comic are so similar. And that's not a bad thing.

> Not only does it parody the Bad Girl explosion, but funny animals, vigilante comics, and Captain Marvel's Rogue Gallery.

This is genre parody at its finest. Not only does it parody the Bad Girl explosion, but funny animal books, vigilante comics, and Captain Marvel's Rogue Gallery. Sky Owens accentuates the figures of the two heroines so nothing is left to the imagination. (Spandex does that, if you didn't know.) And while the heroes mean well and really want to clean up their city, Flex-Woman and Spandex-Girl live in a bubble and really don't realize what type of brutal violence is going on around them. It's like taking Superman and putting him in the world of the Punisher.

However, what's really impressive about Spandex Tights and Lost Cause Productions is that it's an independent that has held on even through the toughest times. For example, not too long ago the book was named Lycrawoman and Spandex Girl. Unfortunately, Lycra™ is a trademark owned by DuPont. DuPont took them to court, they settled, and Lycrawoman was changed to Flex-Woman. Most recently, Lost Cause has slammed an injunction against a certain big comic company (starting with an I) against the naming of one of their characters. Seems Lost Cause Productions had the name first. Which goes to show you that these independent companies can't be laughed at.

You can't beat the combination of both a great comic and a group of people who don't take any crud from anyone. Sure, they may not be around forever. But while they are around Lost Cause Productions and Spandex Tights are certainly keeping it interesting.

Toy picks

Once again this month's column starts off with a report on another variant from Todd Toys. The super-rare Malebolgia figure's paint job has been changed from the earlier green version to purple with teal veins and nipples. A very strange looking figure to say the least. In a more ominous development, collectors around the country are reporting that newer cases are arriving with no Malebolgias in the case at all.

Some Angela figures are arriving with pink and gold ribbons tied around her staff. This appears to have been a limited release as most of these popped up at book chain stores like Books a Million and Bookland, disappeared, and were never seen again. The "No Panties" version is shipping again, probably in response to collector demand. Todd Toys is incredibly in tune with what collectors want and seems to delight in coming up with ways to hold their attention. Mission accomplished ... these are still the hottest toys going.

Batman Forever is a smash hit, breaking box office records left and right. As predicted, the figures are very hot with collectors and kids. The tough ones to get are Riddler and Two Face along with the Transforming Robin. All of these figures are one per case and are snatched up quickly. Watch for a change in the paint on the Transforming Robin. Reports indicate that the paint job on his face was changed very early to highlight the eye area when the mask is activated by cold water.

In other Bat-news, a set of special edition Legends of Batman figures were made available through Warner mall stores and are very limited. The figures come on very nice black and red blister cards and have different paint jobs from the regular versions. The only two figures from the first series not in this special edition are Joker and Catwoman.

Yet another movie line of mention is Congo. The line is dying on the shelves and the movie looks like it's headed for the video store, but there is one early release figure that is worthy of collector attention. The first release figures included a mutant gorilla figure named Skinhead. In the interest of political correctness the name was changed for the toy, but not before a small quantity of figures were produced on a blister card with the old name. Kenner

Wait for these (Aliens) figures to go on clearance and pick one of these up.

applied pink stickers to the front of the cards with the corrected name and shipped them out in the first release. In later shipments the card was changed. Wait for these figures to go on clearance and pick one of these up. The female figure in this line might look familiar to you Aliens collectors out there, for it appears to be a repainted Ripley figure!

Speaking of Aliens, Kaybee and Circus World stores are up to their eyeballs in Aliens Marines. First and second release Marines are being closed out through these popular mall stores in massive quantities. Expect a big drop in the guides as a result of this dumping. The upside is you can pick up a whole set of marines for under ten bucks!

ToyBiz has several new assortments shipping at press time. The current hot figure is the New Invisible Woman. Even though this figure is not short packed, it disappears immediately.

ToyBiz took a sharp left turn into genius when it decided to cast the figure in clear plastic like the Iceman figure and make a truly Invisible Woman. The Transitional Repaint figures of Human Torch and Invisible Woman were much harder to get than anticipated by many and currently commanding up to twenty dollars on the secondary market.

And finally, ToyBiz has announced that it will produce a line of figures for the highly successful "Age of Apocalypse" storyline. The 1st assortment will include Gambit, Magneto, Wolverine, Cyclops and Sabretooth. **Vantage** has seen some of the prototypes of these figures and can honestly say that the dynamic sculpting of this series breaks the mold for Marvel figures. Get ready to be impressed.

Spawn and other characters names and the distinct likeness thereof are registered trademarks and copyrights of Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. and are used with permission and under license. ©1995 Todd Toys® is a brand name of Toy Marketers, Inc.

Do you remember **The Realm, Borderworlds**, or **Normalman**? How about **Trollords, Journey**, or **Beanworld**?

They aren't collectible comics from 1940s with huge price tags or modern bloodfests with card sets or action figures. But if I was starting to collect comics today, I would be digging through the back issue bins checking out these titles - because in a few years, I'm betting that they are going to be worth more than most of the collectible sets sold by the home shopping channels or the mail order specialty services.

What these somewhat obscure comics have going for them are two of the key qualities of collectibility, the ones that many new collectors tend to overlook amid all of the hype from the big publishers: rarity and historical importance. And oh yeah, they are damn fine comic books, too.

Along with the more famous **Teen-age Mutant Ninja Turtles** by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird and **Cerebus** by Dave Sim, these titles were leaders in the black-and-white comics rebellion of the 1980s. A bunch of young writers and artists who had been rejected by Marvel and DC took notice of how the direct retail market for comics worked, crunched the numbers, cashed in their savings bonds, and published their own comic books, usually in black and white to save money on printing.

They solicited the distributors, took orders, printed up copies, shipped them out, and waited for the reaction from fans. Most of the creators bit their nails, hoping they could at least break even. Reactions varied, of course. Eastman and Laird become millionaires. Sim built a loyal audience and created what has become a monument to independent publishing - a creative project that will last a lifetime.

The others aren't so famous, but are significant for other reasons. **The Realm**, created by Ralph Griffith and Stu Kerr, still appears from time to time from Caliber Press, but the first artist to draw the Realm characters, a fellow named Guy Davis, is the powerful visual storyteller of **Sandman Mystery Theater**, the best of the DC Comics Vertigo line.

The Realm © & ® 1995 Guy Davis

Borderworlds was the pet project of Don Simpson, creator of the satirical **Megaton Man** and Don Simpson's **Bizarre Heroes** (recently nominated for an Eisner Award), and an occasional contributor to the comics empire that has become Image. Simpson collaborates from time to time with the guy

who created Normalman, Image founder Jim Valentino, who gets national media attention with **Shadowhawk.**

Journey was written and drawn by William Messner-Loebs, who went on to be a mainstay of DC Comics writers and the words behind **The Maxx**, an Image comic and animated series for MTV created by Sam Keith. **Beanworld**, the environmental saga of a tribe of beans, continues to be published occasionally and the compilation of their original adventures are in a second printing. **Beanworld** creator Larry Marder doesn't have much time for new stuff since he is pretty busy as executive director of Image.

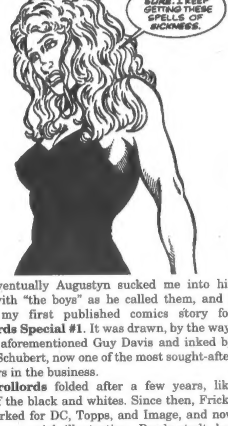
Trollords, however, is my favorite, because if it wasn't for **Trollords,** I wouldn't be writing this column. **Trollords** creators Scott Beaderstadt and Paul Fricke, and their first editor Brian Augustyn (now an editor at DC Comics), dragged me kicking and screaming into comics. When the black and white boom started, I was a business magazine editor with a little comic book habit on the side. I read the Marvels and the DCs, and not much else.

Augustyn showed me the first draft of a comic book produced by a couple of young artists

> (Trollords) was about Death, long before Neil Gaiman gave the topic celebrity status.

not long out of high school. It was in black and white (which turned me off from the start) and featured three funny fantasy characters reminiscent of The Three Stooges. Not my kind of comics.

But the story ... oh my goodness ... the story! It was about Death, long before Neil Gaiman gave the topic celebrity status. It was about suicide. It was about redemption. It was sad and funny at the same time. It was something I had never seen in comics before. And, what impressed me the most, was that it was about two comic creators executing a vision that none of the big comic publishers would ever consider. They borrowed money from a friend's father to get the book printed and they paid him back almost immediately when their orders took off.



The Realm © & © 1995 Gary Reed.

Eventually Augustyn sucked me into his work with "the boys" as he called them, and I wrote my first published comics story for **Trollords Special #1**. It was drawn, by the way, by the aforementioned Guy Davis and inked by Willie Schubert, now one of the most sought-after letterers in the business.

Trollords folded after a few years, like most of the black and whites. Since then, Fricke has worked for DC, Topps, and Image, and now does commercial illustration. Beaderstadt has worked for Archie Comics, Fantagraphics, and Caliber. And if you attend the big comic book conventions, you can see his striking oil paintings on display.

In late 1996, Beaderstadt and Fricke are publishing their first **Trollords** collection, reprinting the first three stories that created so much fuss nearly 10 years ago along with a new Death story. I'm looking forward to it very much because I'm dying to see what the boys are up to these days. Their first stories were about facing down Death and making a life - suitable topics for young creators. Now that they are experienced comic pros, who knows what they'll produce?

That's what makes those old black and white titles so interesting to me, I guess. There weren't many of them printed and very few continue to be published, so that makes them rare. They launched many of the top creators active today, so that gives them historical importance.

And they brought me and many of my friends into comics. That makes them pure gold.

*(Len Strazewski writes **Prime** for Malibu's Ultraverse. He has also written **Flash, Starman,** and **Justice Society of America** for DC. He writes lotsa other stuff too, and **Vantage** is honored to have him aboard.)*

TWO GREAT WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE!

SUBSCRIBE TO VANTAGE COMIC & CARD PICKS!

Vantage Comic & Card Picks **is the world's only magazine for people who are really serious about the comic book marketplace! We don't cover what happened three Tuesdays ago. Oh no, *Vantage* puts it on the line and makes for-real, logical predictions about the future of comics! Get serious. Get *Vantage*.**

GET OUR PICKS WEEKS EARLIER!

This is our most popular subscription option! Each month, before we send *Vantage* to the printer we will mail to you an advance transcript of our comic picks section! This special advance edition of our picks reaches subscribers before each month's advance-order deadline!* That's right – get your comics at a discount by ordering in advance and watch your savings make up for the low *Vantage* subscription price! Plus, you'll get our inside back-issue tips before anyone else! In addition to the Market Guide (the first several pages of this magazine), we throw in our most interesting and most important articles for that month. This "sneak preview" service brings you the best of *Vantage*, before your advance-order deadline!

Amazing! I understand that I will get monthly issues of **Vantage Comic & Card Picks** as they come out! The magazine will reach me each month at about the same time it reaches my local comic shop! Plus, I pay no extra charge for over-sized or special issues! I'll make check or M.O. out to:

Vantage
Sub. Dept. PRR
10238 W. National Ave., # 166
West Allis, WI 53227.

☐ $34.95, 12 Months
☐ $64.95, 24 Months

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
_____
PHONE: (____)_____

☐ Check here if you own or work at a comic shop

☐ Check here if you sell at shows or are otherwise a dealer

SPECIAL LIMITED TIME OFFER!

Get a FREE subscription to the complete magazine...

...when you subscribe to our advance service!

Awesome! I understand that I will get a special advance copy of the comic book picks section, and that I will get my copy before the ADVANCE-ORDER DEADLINE! Plus, I get the most important monthly articles too! I'll make check or M.O. out to:

Vantage
Sub. Dept. MG
10238 W. National Ave., # 166
West Allis, WI 53227.

☐ $49.50, 12 Months
☐ $89.50, 24 Months

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
_____
PHONE: (____)_____

☐ In addition to my advance subscription service please sign me up for a **FREE** one-year subscription to the finished magazine (a $34.95 value)!

We reserve the right to change info or picks if new information comes in before we print **Vantage**. For changes other than small corrections and minor adjustments, we will keep you updated.

Canadian customers same price U.S., timeliness not guaranteed for transcript. Other foreign, price is $59.50 U.S per year for just magazine or just transcript, or $95.50 U.S. per year for magazine plus transcript, timeliness not guaranteed for transcript.

TRIPLE CHROMIUM

NUMBER 1 ISSUES!

ENTITY COMICS

The Heatwave Begins This Summer!

ONLY FROM ENTITY!

Aster & Shaiana (c) 1995 C.A.T.S. Studios; Nira X (c) 1995 Bill Maus